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SUBJECT: Editorial on American Aid and Wheelus Air Base

Attached is an informal translation of an editorial from the November 8, 1958 issue of the weekly newspaper AL-RAID, which contends that Libya is entitled to increased American assistance in return for the perils presented by the presence of Wheelus Air Base on Libyan soil.

COMMENT: This is a line which is being taken increasingly by Tripolitanian provincial officials. Many of them say they agree with the contention that Wheelus Air Base is, in fact, a deterrent to a war in which Libya might become involved, but that "the people" do not understand this and demand more compensation for the risks to which the base exposes them.

For the Ambassador:

J. Paul Barringer
J. Paul Barringer
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:

Translation of
AL-RAID Editorial,
November 8, 1958.

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From Tricoli

AL-RAID Article, November 8, 1958

PRICE OF AN ADVENTURE

"We appreciate the part which American aid is playing in helping our various schemes but it is not getting us to the point where we are satisfied with our economic circumstances, which are well known to all."

With these few words Prime Minister KU'BAR expressed the views of the whole Libyan people in a statement made to the United Press International regarding the important matter of American aid to our country, aid which we receive in return for our good land at "El-Mellaha" (Wheelus Air Base) which in turn places our country in danger.

In fact Wheelus Field is considered within the American strategic plans as being the primary atomic base outside the United States. To Libya it forms a source of peril in case of another world war.

Thus, owing to the strategic importance of the base to the Americans and the dangers it bears to us, it is necessary that the Libyan Government review the matter of the base in general and its rent in particular, in addition to all other obligations arising out of agreements concluded between ourselves and America over the last three years and whether their provisions have been carried out.

On this basis the Prime Minister stated that a review is necessary of the help we are getting in return for the base.

In his remarks the Prime Minister was clearly expressing the desire of all the Libyan people to replan at once relations with their allies and friends to take account of the development of the world situation, the interests of our country, and her economic, and political development. The Prime Minister's attitude is needed in the national interest and welfare, and conforms to the requirements of a free, sovereign state. It has behind it the support of all people of this country.

In brief, the danger posed by this base does not allow material bargaining. We believe that the Americans themselves realize this fact and they may realize it more than we can imagine. We are not threatened by aggression from any source and so cannot consider Wheelus Field as being a means for our defense. That base has been created to defend others of the Free World. Therefore we are not asking much in wishing a review and a new estimate in terms of the worth of our lives and the cost of the adventurous risk to which our country is exposed.

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